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SYR GAWAYN AND THE GRENE KNYȝT—*Concluded*

That Gawain was prominently associated with an Other-World journey has been established on entirely different evidence by Miss Weston, in *The Legend of Sir Gawain*. In her chapter on "The Loves of Gawain" she arrives at conclusions which are strikingly like those we have just reached. She says:

It may also be that the amorous advances made to Gawain by the wife of the *Green Knight* [she means in *GGK*] . . . owe their origin to a reminiscence of this early feature [his being loved by a *fée*].

Further she writes:

Firstly, I think we must admit that Gawain's connection with a lady of supernatural origin is a remarkably well-attested feature of his story. *Secondly*, that between this lady, as represented in the most consecutive accounts of Gawain's adventures, and the queen of the other-world, as represented in Irish tradition, there exists so close a correspondence as to leave little doubt that they were originally one and the same character.¹

That Gawain actually did penetrate into Fairyland through an opening in the earth is established by another ballad, *The Turke &*

¹ P. 51. Her later conclusions about the magician have been invalidated by the recent work of scholars like Professor Brown and Miss Paton, who have shown that the "magician" was originally only a creature of the *fée*. When she comes to the discussion of *GGK*, Miss Weston attempts to relate the beheading episode (without any definite grounds, so far as I can see) to the *Château Merveil* story, and concludes (p. 97): "it was one of the tests he had to undergo in order to prove himself a worthy mate for the enchanter's daughter" (whom she calls elsewhere [p. 102] "his 'other-world' bride"). Later in *The Legend of Sir Percival*, Miss Weston suggests a different theory of the meaning of *GGK*. She considers it part of an old cycle, no longer preserved entire, which had to do with the search for the Grail, and the action of *GGK* is a test to fit Gawain for attaining the Grail. This last theory seems to me to fall because she is unable to show that in any extant story the beheading game was a test to which seekers for the Grail submitted.

Gowin.¹ This has been preserved in a mutilated condition. In the summary that follows I indicate *lacunae* by series of dots.

While the lords and ladies of the Round Table are feasting at court, a man enters, short and broad like a Turke [dwarf?]. He asks: "Is there any will as a brother, | to giue a buffett take another, | giff any soe hardy bee?" Kay says he can knock the Turke down, but Gawain reproves him. . . . The Turke says he will return the blow (which has evidently been given). Gawain says he will go with the Turke (presumably to receive the blow), and that he will never flee from any adventure. The Turke and Gawain ride north more than two days. Gawain grows hungry, and the Turke taunts him. "He led Gawaine to a hill soe plaine; | the earth opened & closed againe." Darkness and storm come, and Gawain is afraid. . . . They come to a castle where they find rooms and excellent food, but the Turke will not let Gawain eat the food he sees, and prepares other dishes for him. Gawain eats and asks the Turke to give him his buffet so that he can go his way. . . . They get in a boat and sail over sea. The Turke shows Gawain a castle in which he says dwells the King of Man, who has with him a hideous rout of giants. . . . [Someone, presumably the King of Man, is speaking.] "Sir Gawain, how are King Arthur and Bishop Bodwine?" Gawain is asked to sit and eat, but Gawain refuses until he has seen adventures. Seventeen giants come out and play with a brass ball. . . . They set Gawain various tasks—like lifting up a great chimney [brasier?—all of which the Turke performs. . . . The king threatens to kill Gawain, and has him led to a boiling cauldron before which stands a giant. The Turke has apparently followed invisibly, but now is seen. The Turke throws the giant into the cauldron, and later throws the king into the same place. . . . The Turke then asks Gawain to cut off his head; when Gawain does so, the Turke stands up a stalwart knight and says Gawain has repaid him for all the service he has done Gawain. They find many people in the castle whom they have not seen before. . . . They bring seventeen ladies to Arthur's court. King Arthur crowns Sir Gromer [the Turke?] King of Man.

It is clear that in this curious medley the story of a blow for a blow has become confused with the story of beheading for disenchantment. But for our purposes the important thing to observe is that Gawain is lured by means of the "blow for a blow" to a place under ground and finally to the Isle of Man² (Fairyland), where he is set various tasks and wins several ladies. Brought into connection with *GGK* it suggests that in an earlier version of the story Gawain

¹ *PFM*, I, 90 ff.

² See p. 53 in the first instalment of this article (in *Mod. Phil.*, XIII, General Section, Part II). It will be remembered that Bláthnat was the daughter of the King of Man.

passed through an opening in the earth, i.e., into the cave called the Green Chapel, and thence into Fairyland.

To sum up the evidence: we have seen that in the only other documents containing the beheading game and showing primitive elements the stories belong to the fairy-mistress type; further, in *GGK* the emphasis on green, the use of the shape-shifter, and the love-making of the lady all point to a fairy-mistress story; finally, the evidence of later versions close to *GGK* constitutes additional proof that the story was originally a fairy-mistress tale, and from other sources it is clear that Gawain was widely known as a voyager to Fairyland and the beloved of a fairy mistress. This would seem to be sufficient to establish *GGK* as originally belonging to the fairy-mistress type. As to how the alterations, which make the story at first sight look unlike the type, were made, one can but guess; but the suggestions which I have given above seem to me reasonable. Wishing to make the poem a complimentary account of the foundation of some order, and wishing to associate with the order ideas of loyalty and courage, the poet placed the incident of Gawain and the fairy in the hospitable castle so as to get it before the beheading game, and thus make the ordeal rather an evidence of his loyalty than a test for the winning of a fairy mistress.¹

II. THE LADY OF THE CASTLE

We have seen in the preceding section that in *GGK* the original love affair between Gawain and the fairy has been changed into a

¹ Professor Nitze calls my attention to the fact that some Other-World stories previous to *GGK* do not represent the winning of a fairy mistress as a necessary object. Thus Pwyll, though he makes an Other-World journey and meets a lady, does not win her; in fact, his relations with her constitute a loyalty test (see Loth's translation, *Les Mabinogion*, I). Hence it is always possible that the lady in *GGK* has the traditional rôle of a helpful person—a kind of doublet of the fairy mistress herself, a fairy mistress reduced to a secondary position. Brown (in *PMLA*, XXV, 689) summarizes a very early story, the *Tochmarc Emere*, which has such a helpful maiden, and (*ibid.*, 697, n. 2) a modern folk-tale of similar character. In his *Iwain* (p. 39; cf. also p. 35) Brown writes: "There is a dangerous passage on the way to the Other-World, according to the *Serglige*, from which Loeg is told that he will not return alive unless a woman protects him. Liban [sister of Fand, the fairy mistress] therefore takes him by the shoulder at this point. Similarly in the *Iwain* the hero escapes from the peril at the falling gates by the aid of a woman, Lunete, who is, like Liban, the messenger and *confidante* of the lady." Lunete gives Iwain a ring which can make him invisible and thus protect him in the adventure. In the *Peredur* also a lady gives the hero a stone that makes him invisible. She seems to be the fairy mistress herself, but she meets him *before* the adventure (*Les Mabinogion*, ed. 1913, II, 95). In the *Eledus et Serene*, the lady gives the hero a ring (whose powers are not stated) before the adventure (Suchier, *ZrP*, XXI, 112 ff.; Nitze, *Mod. Phil.*, VII, 163, note).

test of loyalty. We may now consider the steps by which such a change could take place.

In stories of the fairy-mistress type, the fairy commonly offers herself freely to the mortal hero; she is the active mover in the relationship. Professor Zimmer in a recent article brought out this fact as a general characteristic of the manners of women among the early Celts.¹ After analyzing the action of the important women-characters in *Táin bō Cūalnge* and the *Fled Bricrend*, he concludes: "Im Geschlechtsleben das Weib so dasteht, dass es fordert und der Mann sich hingibt, einwilligt, daher der Mann der Verschämte und das Weib die Schamlose ist."² In this respect the customs of the Celts as shown in the romances are precisely the opposite of those of the Greeks and Romans. Professor Zimmer continues: "Also Frauen sind die Entführer der Männer zur Zeit der alten irischen Heldensage, sie sind das treibende Element und der Mann das zurückhaltende: gefällt ihnen ein Mann, so bieten sie sich an, und will der Mann nicht, wendet er sich schamvoll vor schamlose Verlangen ab."³ Naturally, with the coming in of Christianity and the influence of other civilizations, the custom changed, and it was no longer thought proper for a woman to offer herself to a man. This altered standard then influenced redactors of old stories and made them feel that the actions of early heroines were not moral. Hence they changed their originals. "Je jünger die Texte nämlich werden, um so mehr schwindet das Charakteristische der S. 177-210 vorgeführten Bilder, es wird einfach mehr und mehr—wenn auch nicht völlig—Unsittlichkeit beider Geschlechter."⁴

In the case of the original of *GGK* the situation was made still worse by the fact that early rationalizers had made the shape-shifter the husband of the lady (i.e., the *fée*). The action of a wife in wooing

¹ *Sitzungsberichte der Königl. preuss. Akad. der Wissensch.*, 1911, p. 174.

² *Ibid.*, p. 213.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 219. Professor Nitze (*Mod. Phil.*, IX, 25) discusses the advances which Blancheffleur makes to Perceval and concludes that they are "referable . . . to a cruder state of society in which the wooing quite naturally fell to the part of woman." Miss Paton (*Fairy Mythology*, p. 5) calls attention to the fact that the fairy always makes advances to the mortal hero. There are several examples in *Perlesvaus*. See also Cross, *Mod. Phil.*, XII, 604-5, 611-13, 635-37.

⁴ *Sitzungsberichte*, p. 212. Examples of alterations made in stories of which the older form exists are given on pp. 184 and 188.

a hero might in the later period of French romance have been proper enough; but in this early time it would have been regarded as most immoral.¹ If there was still any realization that the lady was a *fée*, zealous churchmen would recall the widespread idea that the heathen gods and fairies were demons. They would likewise think of the familiar parallel of Potiphar's wife.² Thus the idea of the fairies as demons, the similarity of the fairy's action to that of Potiphar's wife, and above all the fact that such action was regarded as immoral, would naturally give to this episode a coloring of evil. Then storytellers would be compelled either to gloss it over, or to interpret it in some way consistent with the morals of their time.³ Now a woman's offering herself in this way to a man might be either a genuine allurement to evil, or it might be a test. The first of these, a temptation like that of Venus in the Tannhäuser story, would not be congruous with *GGK*, which is the account of a hero's success in passing a test. The point of this story is that a hero surmounts a test for valor; it would have to be changed entirely if he fell into immorality. On the other hand, as the point of the story is a test for courage, what more natural than that the lady's action should be interpreted as a test of some other virtue? The purpose of the beheading game would in fact suggest the use of the lady's allurement as a second test. By treating the action of the lady in this way the storyteller could retain all the features of her conduct in the original story and yet make it accord with the taste of his own time.

A more specific cause for the transformation of the fairy mistress into the instrument of a test, however, can be pointed out. It is clear (and generally recognized) that *GGK* is connected in some way with a chivalric order. It gives a poetic history of a certain badge worn by the members of that order; and the purpose of the poem is, as already stated, to associate chivalric virtues with the order and the badge. The story in its older form gave a test of courage, and

¹ Zimmer points out that the author of the *Fled Bricrend* has suppressed the love-affair of Bláthnat and Cuchulinn (*ibid.*, p. 205). See the first instalment of this article, p. 54, note.

² Note also the common mediaeval motif of a beautiful lady tempting a saint. Countless instances could be given. See for example the *Catalogue of Romances*, III, 17 (No. 29), 20 (No. 165), 66 (No. 13), 653 (No. 80).

³ See Cross, *Mod. Phil.*, XII, 615, n. 1, on Christianized versions of fairy-mistress stories.

the fact that courage was a knightly virtue doubtless suggested to some redactor the idea of developing a work which by various tests would show forth a perfect knight, and give a meaning to the green lace. Hence the second test, to define more exactly the chivalrous ideal.

Now it is unfortunate that there is no established series of knightly virtues, like the poverty, chastity, and obedience of the monks. Various mediaeval documents give such widely differing groups of chivalrous virtues that a reader must finally conclude that any and all good qualities were knightly. *GGK* (ll. 652 ff.) gives "fraunchyse, felaȝshyp, clannes, cortaysye and pite"; Froissart in one place says of a knight that he possessed "toutes les nobles vertus que un chevalier doit avoir: il fut lie, loyal, amoureux, sage, secret, large, pieux, hardi, entreprenant et chevalereux."¹ Gilbert de la Haye names "charitee and gude thewis, lautee and justice."² One might continue the enumeration of virtues and sources to almost any length; but one cannot discover any established and well-known group of chivalrous qualities.³

The poet of *GGK* therefore had a right to use almost any eminent virtue. As a matter of fact he chose to turn the episode of Gawain and the lady into a test for loyalty. Here I must stop to point out that it is not a test for chastity. Professor Gollancz has evidently misunderstood the poem, for he speaks of Gawain as "the knight of chastity," and says: "*Gawayne* is the story of a noble knight triumphing over the sore temptations that beset his vows of chastity."⁴ Now there is nothing in the poem about chastity. After the second day's test the knight says to Gawain: "I haf fraysted pe twys, & faythful I fynde pe" (l. 1679). After he has dealt the blow he says:⁵ "Bot here yow lakked a lyttel, sir, & lewte yow wonted." Later Gawain himself says that he has failed in *lewte*, and

¹ Ed. Kervyn de Lettenhove, I, 194.

² *The Buke of the Order of Knychthede* (Abbotsford Club), p. 11.

³ See *La Curie de Ste.-Palaye*, I, 63, 68, 115 ff., 118 ff.; Gautier, pp. 66 ff., 79, 82, 85; Schulz (*Das höfische Leben*), I, 187; Froissart, *ed. cit.*, I, 193, 194, 195.

⁴ *Cambridge History*, I, 367-69. I do not mean to infer that Professor Gollancz is the first or the only scholar to suggest this view. I quote him because his discussion is typical of the attitudes of scholars, and is found in a widely used work of reference.

⁵ L. 2366. See the whole passage, ll. 2345 ff.

charges that failure upon his "cowardyse" (=lack of courage) and "couetyse" (=lack of "larges"):

For care of þy knokke cowardyse me taȝt
 To a-corde me with couetyse, my kynde to for-sake,
 Þat is larges & lewte, þat longeȝ to knyȝteȝ [ll. 2379 ff.].¹

That loyalty was the virtue involved in the second test is made clear also in *The Green Knight*. The Green Knight says that he means to test Gawain's "three points" (l. 70); they are points "that longeth to manhood" (l. 108). When Gawain has been tested, the knight says:

Of curtesie thou might haue woon the crowne
 aboue both free & bound
 And also of great gentrye:
 now 3 points be put fro thee,
 it is the Moe pittye:
 Sir Gawaine! thou wast not Leele
 When thou didst the lace conceale
 that my wiffe gaue to thee!

In other words, Gawain has lost his "three points" because he failed in one of them, loyalty. The test is most certainly not one of chastity, but one of loyalty.²

Barbour has an interesting passage to which Professor Schofield refers, but which he does not print. It is as follows:

Leavte to luff is gretumly;
 Throuch leavte liffis men rychtwisly:
 With A wertu [of] leavte
 A man may ȝeit sufficyand be:
 And but leawte may nane haiff price,
 Quhethir he be wycht or he be wys;
 For quhar It failȝeys, na wertu
 May be off price, na of valu,
 To mak A man sa gud, that he
 May symply gud man callȝt be.³

¹ In l. 2499 also the poet says that Gawain received the cut "for his unleute." Of course other virtues are mentioned secondarily. Perhaps the Green Knight does refer to Gawain's chastity in l. 2367: "Bot þat watȝ for no wylyde werke, ne wowyng nauper."

² It is to be noted that with the fall of the idea that the test shows Gawain's chastity disappears one of the chief arguments for unity of authorship of *GGK* and the other poems in MS Nero A.X. The interest of the Gawain poet is not in theology or in morals, but in worldly affairs and specifically chivalric virtues.

³ Bruce (*EETS*), I, 365 ff.

Of the importance of loyalty as a chivalric virtue it is hardly necessary to speak. It generally appears in such lists of knightly qualities as those mentioned on p. 118. Professor Schofield has printed a poem by Watrquet de Couvin on loyalty, and he refers to other similar treatments of it as a chivalric virtue.¹

Up to this point I have not mentioned a document commonly considered an analogue of *GJK*—*Gawain and the Carle of Carlile*—because the beheading incident in it, as the poem now exists, is of a different kind from that of *GJK*. Now that the character of the second test in *GJK* is clear, however, we may find it worth while to consider the *Carle*.²

Gawain, Kay, and Bishop Bodwin after a day of hunting follow a red deer into a great forest. A thick mist falls upon them and causes them to lose both the deer and their way. Bodwin says he knows of a Carle dwelling in a castle near by. Anyone who stays with the Carle and escapes thereafter is lucky. The three hunters go to the castle and gain admittance. The Carle is a terrible fellow, fifty cubits tall, and he has long been a foe to King Arthur. In the hall he keeps strange pets, a bull, a boar, and a lion. During his conversation with his guests the Carle shows a curious ability to read their thoughts. After a time first one and then another of the guests decides to go to the stable and care for his horse. Kay and the Bishop separately find a horse of the Carle's near their own, and each drives it out harshly. Gawain, however, treats the horse kindly, even covering it with his cloak. After supper, the Carle has Gawain throw a spear at his head; Gawain casts it with all his might, but the Carle dodges it safely. Then the Carle takes Gawain to his wife's bed, puts him in, and tells him to kiss the lady three times but do no other villainy. Gawain would do more, but the Carle stops him, promising to bring him to a fairer lady. He takes Gawain to his daughter's chamber and leaves him there for the night. Next morning he shows Gawain the bones of fifteen hundred men whom he and his animals have slain. After dinner the Carle takes Gawain to a room and asks him to cut off his head. When Gawain has done so, the Carle stands up a man of Gawain's height and says he was so enchanted until a knight of the Round Table should cut off his head.

This story, because of its possession of the character of the Imperious Host, has been compared to the *Chevalier à l'espée*. It has many features of the Other-World journey plus the fairy-mistress story. Its beginning—the three hunters led astray by their chase—

¹ *Chivalry in English Literature*, p. 278. See also Gautier, pp. 29, 79–81.

² *PFM*, III, 277–94.

reminds one of stories of the type of Guingamor. The mist which troubles them is the "druidical mist" through which those who are going to the Other World pass just before they arrive.¹ Further, the happenings in the castle seem to be a series of tests. The episode of the horses is a test of the hero's courtesy, a fact that is indicated definitely three times in the Porkington version, in which the Carle tells the Bishop and Kay that they have failed in courtesy (ll. 314, 329-30) and thanks Gawain for his courtesy (l. 353); the casting of the spear is probably a test of his constancy and obedience. Wild animals figure much as they do in *MSF* and other stories. And those who fail in the tests are killed, as commonly in these stories. Finally at the end the hero wins a beautiful lady (the *fée*). Now the curious episode in which the Carle puts Gawain into bed with his wife is obviously one of the tests, and, though not explained at all, it is clearly, like the similar situation in *GGK*, a test of loyalty. That it is not a test of chastity is shown by the fact that Gawain is later given the daughter. She is his reward for having fulfilled the commands of his host and shown his loyalty. The beheading episode differs entirely from that of *GGK* in that it is a beheading for disenchantment.² It is entirely possible, however, that originally it was the same as in *GGK*. In support of this suggestion is the fact that beheading for disenchantment is much more common in folklore than the beheading game which we have been studying. Hence at a later time, when the strange features of the beheading game were no longer understood, a substitution of the more common for the more unusual story would be natural. We have seen this process actually taking place in the *Turke and Gowin*, where the conditions at the beginning are those of *GGK*, but at the end have been changed to beheading for disenchantment. Further, the confused episode of the throwing of the spear at the Carle may be a remainder of the old beheading incident: it seems to have little point and is actually half of the proposition "a strok for an oper." The beheading incident which now stands in the story was placed at the end because it ordinarily ends the adventures in the stories in which it occurs. A further argument in favor of such an interpretation

¹ See the *Fled Bricrend*, above.

² See Professor Kittredge's article, *Jour. Am. Folk Lore*, XVIII (1905), 1 ff.

is the fact that later forms of stories frequently represent Other-World beings as under enchantment (since their extraordinary actions are no longer understood by those who have no knowledge of the Other World). Finally, if we understand that the original proposition of the Carle to Gawain was not: "Cast this spear at my head," but "Give me a blow with this instrument [probably an ax] and I will give you another," and that the beheading for disenchantment is an addition, we have a coherent story of a primitive type. Thus the *Carle of Carlile* is probably an analogue of *GGK*, and the hero's relations with the wives are certainly in both cases tests of loyalty. The similarity of the two stories in this last respect argues for contact between the two at some early time, or actual identity of source.

The test for loyalty occurs also in one French poem, the *Yder*. It forms but an incidental episode in a story the main action of which has no similarity to *GGK* or the other documents we have been discussing.

Yder has left Arthur's court in anger. He rides along seeking someone who will make him a knight. He meets King Ivenant, and tells the latter his desire. Ivenant says that he will make Yder a knight, under condition, however, that Yder shall first ride to Ivenant's castle and submit to temptation by the latter's wife. Yder, confident in his ability to withstand this temptation because of his consciousness of love for his own lady, agrees. He rides alone to the castle. The lady offers him her love but meets with steadfast refusal. The king returns to the castle and makes Yder a knight.¹

¹ *Der altfranzösische Yderroman*, ed. H. Gelzer, II, 185 ff. Dr. Gelzer compares the episode to similar ones in *Perceval* (the Gawain-Guigambresil story—II, 7085 ff.—see Miss Thomas' dissertation), the *Roman de la Charette*, which involves a story of a knight's refusal of a lady's proffered love, not very close in detail to either *GGK* or *Yder*, and *Guinglain*, besides *GGK*. See Gelzer's Introduction, pp. lviii–lix. In *Guinglain*, the lady visits the knight in his bedroom at night, somewhat as the lady in *GGK* visits Gawain, but there is no testing. See Professor Schofield's *Studies on the Libeaus Desconus*, pp. 40, 148 (the same incident in the Welsh *Peredur*), and 156. As none of these stories has the device of the interchange of winnings by the hero and the husband, they cannot be connected in detail with *GGK*. But the general situation in *GGK* and *Yder* is obviously the same, and a knowledge of the *Yder* or some variant of it may have suggested to the author of *GGK* the particular kind of test into which he made the relation of the *fée* and Gawain.

It is no part of my function to consider the origin of such an episode as that in *Yder*, because it is not an original part of *GGK*. It probably goes back ultimately to the savage custom of a husband's lending his wife to a guest as an act of hospitality. See Westermarck, *The History of Human Marriage*, pp. 73 ff. References to such practices occur in Crawley, *Mystic Rose*, p. 479; Spencer and Gillen, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia*, pp. 98 ff.; and Hartland, *Primitive Paternity*, II, 229. For further references see Nitze, *Mod. Phil.*, IX, 316. The guest's rejection of the offer probably represents a later social

To give additional force to the temptation by the lady as a test for loyalty, the Gawain poet uses a further motif: on three successive nights, the lord of the castle proposes to Gawain that he and Gawain shall exchange what each gains on the following day. For the first two days Gawain faithfully performs his part of the bargain, giving kisses for the lord's game. But on the third day he does not give the lord the girdle which he had received from the lady, and so fails in loyalty. This added machinery, used to focus the test more clearly, is certainly connected with a story extant in a mediaeval Latin poem, the *Miles Gloriosus*.¹

A poor young knight comes to Rome and there makes the acquaintance of a rich citizen (called Civis). The latter proposes a sort of partnership in which the common stock shall be divided between the two:

Me tibi teque mihi lucri mensura coaequet;
una sit in duplici partitione fides.

The knight goes away, meets the wife of the citizen, and is loved by her. She offers him her riches for his love. The knight takes half of these riches to the citizen, and tells the latter how he got them. Civis advises the knight to return to the lady, and after the knight's departure, he brings his wife's brothers to his home. The lady conceals the knight between the bed and the wall. The husband goes away baffled; when next day the knight comes with more money and reveals what had happened, Civis again advises the knight to return to the lady, and attempts a second surprise. Disappointed again, he tries and fails a third time. Then he tries a new trick. He invites the knight to a feast, and has his wife's brothers and his wife, veiled, present. He gets the knight to tell of his adventure. The knight tells of the first two surprises by the husband (which he had before narrated to the latter), but just as he is about to tell how he escaped from the third, the lady presses her foot upon his and so causes him to recognize her. He turns his narration saying that as he was going along he came to a glass bridge, which broke under him, tumbling him into the water below. Then he awoke—all that he had told before was a dream. The lady's brothers, enraged at the husband's jealousy and, supposedly, false suspicion of their sister, drive him into exile. The knight and lady marry and are happy.

development, when it was considered courteous to his host not to accept this privilege. Professor Nitze (*Elliott Studies*, I, 29, n. 17) notes a similar instance of rejection in the *Mabinogion*, and compares it with *GGK*.

¹ Ed. Du Méril, *Origines latines du Théâtre moderne*, pp. 285 ff. The play dates from about the twelfth century. For discussion of it, see Cloetta, *Beiträge zur Literaturgeschichte des Mittelalters*, I, 79 ff. and 153 ff. I owe this reference, and that to the Italian *novelle* mentioned below, to Professor Manly.

This story has obviously a relationship with *GGK*, in the proposition of the husband of the exchange of winnings,¹ and the three-day settlement of the lover with the husband.

The story itself is of a popular, *fabliau* character, and probably widespread. At any rate we find many versions of it in the Italian *novelle* and derived narratives of a later time.² None of these later stories which I have been able to see, however, contains the exchange of winnings. The type of these stories is as follows: a young man comes into contact with an older man, and receives advice from the latter as to how to succeed in love or in worldly affairs. Following this suggestion, the young man meets the wife of his adviser, quickly wins her love, and relates his success to the husband. The latter soon suspects that it is his wife who is involved, and lays traps for the lovers. Through the ingenuity of the lady the young man always escapes. The lover, never suspecting that the husband is his adviser, relates his experiences day by day. The husband is insanely jealous. The interest of these stories seems to lie in the devices of the wife in concealing her lover, and the wild jealousy of the husband.

This story is possibly of oriental origin. At any rate it occurs in the Breslau edition of the *Arabian Nights*.³ As the date and place of composition of this version are unknown, however, it is impossible to draw any certain conclusion as to ultimate origin. It is found, however, in Ser Giovanni's *Il Pecorone* (I, 2), which dates from the fourteenth century, and in many succeeding collections.⁴ Finally it appears in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* in the relation of Falstaff and Mr. Ford and in the tricks used for concealing Falstaff.

Just how much of all this the Gawain poet knew it is hard to say. But he certainly knew a story like that of the *Miles Gloriosus*, and

¹ The exchange is more like that in the *Green Knight* than that in *GGK* in that half of what each acquires is given to the other.

² The similarity of the *Miles Gloriosus* to one of Straparola's *novelle* was noted by a writer in the *Histoire littéraire*, XXII, 61.

³ Burton, *Supplemental Nights*, I, 203 ff.; discussed, and relation to Straparola's and Ser Giovanni's *novelle* pointed out, *ibid.*, II, 319 ff.

⁴ See G. Rua, *Le Piacevoli notti di Straparola*, 1898, pp. 68 ff.; Simrock, *Die Quellen des Shakspeare*, I, 321 ff.; Collier-Hazlitt, *Shakspeare's Library*, III, 3 ff. In the following list of versions, there are two or three that I have not been able to verify, because the books are not available in Chicago: Fortini, I, 6; Straparola, IV, 4; Doni, 35; Lindener, *Rastbuchlein*; Cryptadia, I, 2; II, 15; Forteguerrri, VI; Tarleton, *Newes out of Purgatorie*; *Gil Blas*, Book V; Masuccio, 45; *Contes d'Ouville*, 1732.

he may have been acquainted with the episode in *Yder*, or some variant of it. At any rate it is clear that he turned the love of the lady for Gawain into a test similar to that of *Yder*, and that he increased Gawain's obligations, and made the test more clear-cut, by adding the device of the exchange of winnings and the daily settlement with the husband, which he probably derived from a popular tale similar to the *Miles Gloriosus*.

In view of the points brought out in these two sections it is natural to think of establishing more exactly the relations of the English versions, to draw up a family tree of them. Such an attempt, however, seems to me foredoomed to failure. We haven't enough facts. Of the four English documents, *GGK* and the *Green Knight* are obviously most closely related. If we attempt, however, to determine exactly that relationship, we at once meet with difficulty. If we assume with Hales that the *Green Knight* is derived directly from *GGK*,¹ we must suppose that all those features in which the later version seems to be more archaic than *GGK* are chance alterations of the redactor. Such a supposition seems to me untenable because it implies that a story-teller would make his story weaker and less logical—and at the same time by mere chance more like its remote original. For example, in *GGK* the attitude of the lady to Gawain is entirely consistent with the plan of the tests; but in the *Green Knight* it is not, for there we are told that she really loved him, that her mother had planned the beheading game as a trick to entice Gawain to the lady. Thus there are two inconsistent purposes—the love of the lady, and the test of the hero. What possible reason could a story-teller have for weakening the plan of the test by having the lady love Gawain? Note also that this alteration makes the action of the *Green Knight* entirely inconsistent—he is testing the hero, and at the same time acting the weak part of a means for bringing together his wife and her lover. At the end of the story he appears as the feeblest, least impressive of characters.

If we assume that *GGK* and the *Green Knight* are derived independently from a common source, we also meet with difficulties. In that case, the source of the two must have been composed in honor

¹ See p. 77 in the first instalment of this article.

of some order, since that feature is found in both versions. Further, the test of loyalty must have been in the source, and hence the relations of Gawain and the lady must have been much as they are in *GGK*. Yet there must have been a hint that the lady really loved Gawain, and that the beheading game was merely a device for luring him to her. Otherwise where did the *Green Knight* get these elements? Thus we are brought to the necessity of assuming that the source had the same inconsistency which makes the *Green Knight* so feeble and ineffective. Now that assumption is inherently improbable. The man who had the cleverness to see in the old folk-story a means of glorifying an order, and conceived the idea of making the hero's relations with the lady a test of his loyalty, would most probably have been able to keep the plan clearly enough in mind to make the story consistent; he, the originator of the idea, must surely have had it as clear before him as his follower, the redactor of *GGK*. In fact, he would probably have made the episode of the lord and lady of the castle much as it is in *GGK*. Further, there is some unlikelihood in supposing that the connection of the story with an order goes back of *GGK*; the poem is too good to be a mere imitation of a story already connected with an order.

As it is difficult to suppose either that the *Green Knight* was derived from *GGK* or that the two come independently from a common source, one naturally thinks of contamination. It seems to me most probable that the *Green Knight* was derived from *GGK*, but with the addition of elements from oral versions of the story which the redactor knew. In other words, working upon the basis of the poem,¹ the redactor tried to reconcile it with an oral version that was probably widely known. From *GGK* he got the idea of the connection with an order and the test for loyalty, and to these he added from an oral version the idea that the lady loved Gawain, and that the beheading incident was a device for attracting him to her. Of course this oral version must have been much nearer to the old folk-tale in its details than *GGK* was. As to the general likelihood of contamination, anyone familiar with popular stories will know that it is constantly appearing in such literature.

¹ He probably did not have the poem actually before him. The lack of verbal correspondences would suggest that he had only an outline, or that perhaps the story had got into oral transmission from the poem.

With regard to the *Turke and Gowin* and *Gawain and the Carle of Carlile*, we have even less to go upon. They may have been originally the same story as that of *GGK*, or merely a story of similar type greatly influenced by the story of the green knight. In both stories many details were probably derived from another source than *GGK*—e.g., the Imperious Host in the *Carle of Carlile*, and the curious feats of the “Turke” in the *Turke and Gowin*. If the *Turke and Gowin* was derived from the green knight story and not merely influenced by it, it probably comes from a form of the story anterior to *GGK*, at any rate to a form which had no connection with an order, and did not use the lady as a test. The *Carle of Carlile* has an episode suggestive of the lady’s test in *GGK*,¹ but it mentions no relation to an order. It is nearer the original form of the story than *GGK* in that in it the hero wins a lady by passing through certain tests. If it is actually derived from the green knight story, probably it comes from an earlier form of it than *GGK*, and the episode of Gawain and the Carle’s wife may be due to contamination.

From the foregoing discussion it is probably clear to the reader that it is impossible to establish exact relationships between so small a number of versions of a popular tale. The problem is quite a different one from that of a comparison of several manuscripts of a single document. Even in the latter case, contamination is not infrequent; in the former conditions make for constant and complex contamination. In any event, I think it probable that the author of *GGK* was the person who transformed the relations of the lady and Gawain into a test of loyalty, and that he also made the connection with an order. The *Green Knight* was probably derived from *GGK* but with additions from another source representing an earlier, more primitive form of the story. Whether the *Turke and Gowin* and the *Carle of Carlile* were derived from the story of the green knight or only influenced by it, they give valuable evidence as to the features of the original story of *GGK*.

III. THE GREEN CHAPEL

The Green Chapel, as we have seen, is really not a chapel in any proper sense, but a fairy mound. How did it come to get so curious a name? Dr. A. Hertel, in his dissertation *Verzauberte Örtlichkeiten*

¹ See p. 121.

und Gegenstände in der altfranzösischen erzählenden Dichtung, after discussing Zauberschlösser which include Feenschlösser, Schlösser von wunderbarer Bauart, and Die von Teufeln und Zauberern bewohnten Schlösser, has a short account of magic chapels.¹ He writes:

Die verzauberten Kapellen treten in weit geringerer Anzahl als die Schlösser auf. Da dem Orte entsprechend das christliche Element besonders in den Vordergrund tritt, so zeigen sie eine grosse Ähnlichkeit mit den vom Teufel in Besitz genommenen Schlössern.

The statement about the devil is curiously congruous with Gawain's remarks when he looks at the Green Chapel:

He[re] myzt aboute myd-nyzt,
[r]e dele his matynnes telle [ll. 2187-8].
Wel bisemeȝ þe wyȝe wruxled in grene
Dele here his deuocioun, on þe deuueleȝ wyse [ll. 2191-92].²

Dr. Hertel refers to the *Perceval* (ll. 3537 ff.; cf. also l. 19925); the "gäste capele" of the *Chevalier as deus espées*, from which no one has ever returned (ll. 457 ff., 698, 755 ff., 870); and the fight of Duke Richard of Normandy with the devil, in a chapel.³

This list could be very considerably amplified by a search through the French romances. For example, in Wauchier's *Perceval* there is a Chapel of the Black Hand in which a mysterious black hand appears and puts out the candle on the altar.⁴ In *Perlesvaus* there are several chapels at which extraordinary things happen. In one, which Arthur described as perilous, a strife between good and bad spirits is heard. "No Knight returneth thence but he be dead or wounded."⁵ Another is situated in the Grave-Yard Perilous, and is protected by a host of ghostly knights.⁶ Still a different one, apparently, is the Chapel Perilous, where "an evil folk" wounded a knight. When Launcelot goes there he is also beset by "earthly fiends" in the form of knights, but manages to escape through the virtues of a certain sword.⁷

¹ Pp. 25-27.

² Note also the common confusion between fairyland and hell.

³ *Chronique des Ducs de Normandie*, par Benoît, ed. Fr. Michel, 25012; Wace's *Roman de Rou*, ed. Andresen, III, 259 ff.

⁴ See summary in Nutt's *Legend of the Holy Grail*, pp. 15, 18.

⁵ See translation under title *The High History of the Holy Grail*, Everyman's Library, pp. 4, 8, 10-11.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 181-83.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 311-13.

The idea of chapels as places where mysterious, dangerous, and terrible things happened doubtless goes back to the well-known early Christian practice of building chapels or churches on spots formerly connected with heathen worship. Thus menhirs (or standing stones) and holy wells were consecrated.¹ Even when, to counteract the superstition attached to the old sacred places, the church had consecrated them or built chapels near them, the old fear would doubtless remain. The folk memory of the old god and the old rites would remain and color the attitude of people to the spot. The shape which such a fancy might take is illustrated by a story told of St. Silvester. A dragon was infesting a cave in the Capitoline Hill at Rome and slaying people by the poison of his breath. Under the direction of St. Peter, who appeared to him in a vision, Silvester descended into the cave and sealed the mouth of the creature. Though not directly in contact with a church, this cave must have been not far from the Church of Ara Coeli. Cumont discusses the story and concludes that it is a sort of reminiscence of the worship of Hecate, which had been carried on in a cave on the Capitoline Hill.² So we have the union of the two elements—the name *chapel*, and the feeling, which the Gawain poet expresses, that it is a haunt of devils.

Instances in which barrows have become connected with Christian worship, usually through the building of a church on them, are not infrequent in England. About the matter in general Thomas Wright says: "Imagination easily converted the tenant of the lonely mound into a primitive saint . . . and a monastery, or even a cathedral, was erected over the site which had been consecrated by the mystic rites of an earlier age." He mentions in particular the monasteries of Croyland and St. Albans.³ Borlase discusses the Chapel Karn Brea in Cornwall, and gives a picture of it. The chapel was built on a mound which had been chambered.⁴ He remarks: "Veneration for the spot on the part of the natives probably induced

¹ Walter Johnson, *Folk Memory*, pp. 132–36, and the references indicated there; Woods-Martin, *Traces of the Elder Faiths of Ireland*, I, 279–82; II, 46 ff., 87 ff., 93 note, 98, 206 ff. For consecration of a heathen grove, see Negri, *Julian the Apostate* (trans.), p. 355. For building of churches on spots associated with heathen worship, see René Merlet, *The Cathedral of Chartres* (trans.), pp. 8 ff.; Bright, *Early English Church History*, pp. 78 ff.; Plummer's ed. of Bede, I, 65.

² *Textes et Monuments relatifs aux mystères de Mithra*, I, 351.

³ *Archaeologia*, XXXIII, 262.

⁴ *Ibid.*, XLIX, 195.

the Christian missionaries to adopt it for themselves.”¹ Mr. T. W. Shore gives a number of examples of ancient churches in Hampshire which were built on artificial mounds. Among them is one, still called St. Martin’s Hill, on which there was formerly a church dedicated to St. Martin.² This last instance suggests the possibility that in the case of *GCK* the name “chapel” may be attached to the hill because at some earlier time a chapel was built on the mound. If this was not the case, we can explain the use of the word here as a transfer from other places which like St. Martin’s Hill or the Chapel Karn Brea did have chapels on them. The phenomenon then would be much like that of certain instances which Dr. Hertel discusses.

Finally Dr. Hertel remarks:

Nicht hierher rechne ich die beiden im Fergus 58 und 105 vorkommenden Kapellen, die eigentlich ihren Charakter als solche, d. h. als Gotteshäuser, gänzlich verloren haben. . . . Ich glaube daher, dass der Dichter den Ausdruck “capiele” hier nur gebraucht hat, um ein einsam liegendes kleineres Gebäude, nicht aber eine Kapelle im engeren Sinne des Wortes damit zu bezeichnen.

In the *Fergus*, the hero, a country youth who desires to become a member of Arthur’s court, is sent to the black mountain where Merlin has long dwelt. There he finds a “chapel” before which stands a gigantic figure with a hammer. He breaks it to pieces, enters, and takes from the neck of an ivory lion inside a horn and veil. He blows the horn three times. A black knight appears and is overcome by Fergus. On another occasion Fergus comes to a plain containing a fountain and a chapel inhabited by a dwarf. When anyone drinks from the fountain, the dwarf comes out of the chapel and tells the traveler’s fortune.

From the foregoing evidence it is clear that the idea of a chapel as a spot haunted by evil spirits, and the use of the word “chapel” of a place not consecrated at all but enchanted and the scene of strange happenings, is current in the French romances. Hence it was quite natural that the Gawain poet should take from the French romances with which he was familiar the word “chapel,” and apply it to the uncanny spot where Gawain was to undergo the head-cutting test.

¹ *Archaeologia*, XXXIII, 197.

² *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, XX, 9.

IV. THE GREEN "LACE"

One of the most widespread motifs in fairy stories is the gift by the fairy to some mortal favorite of an article with magic properties. It is in fact so common that it cannot be considered as specially attached to any one type of story or to any one people. In Irish fairy-mistress stories, the most characteristic gifts are a silver branch¹ and an apple which never diminishes.² In French stories of apparently Celtic origin rings occur as fairy gifts. In the *Iwain*, Laudine gives the hero a ring which will release him from prison, keep him from loss of blood, and free him from all evil.³ In the story of *Désiré* the fairy gives the hero a ring which will provide him with as much gold and silver as he desires.⁴ Hertel gives an example from the French romance, *Brun de la Montaigne*, of a ring given by a *fée* to her lover to protect him, and of other rings of magic power. In modern folklore and the mediaeval romances examples of similar marvel-working gifts could be multiplied.⁵ A case quite similar to the one in *GGK* occurs in *Diu Krône*, where we are told that Gasozein has a girdle which he received from Guinevere and which makes its wearer invincible in battle. Gawain had gained it for Guinevere, and it was originally made by fairies.⁶ In the Irish story of the *Conception of Mongan* also, there is a girdle "of such a nature that neither sickness nor trouble would seize the side on which it was."⁷ From the fact that this is a customary feature of fairy stories, it seems probable that it existed in the Gawain poet's source.

Now it is important to get as clear an idea as we can of what the "lace" was like and how it was worn. It is first mentioned in ll. 1829 ff., where the lady offers it to Gawain:

I schal gif yow my girdel, þat gaynes yow lasse.
 Ho laȝt a lace lyȝtly, þat leke vmbe hir sydeȝ,
 Knit vpon hir kyrtel, vnder þe clere mantyle,
 Gered hit watȝ with grene sylke, & with golde schaped,
 Noȝt bot arounde brayden, beten with fyngreȝ.

¹ *Voyage of Bran*, I, 4, 16.

² *Echtra Condla* in *Voyage of Bran*, I, 145.

³ Brown, *Iwain*, p. 128.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

⁵ Cf. Brown, *Romanic Review*, III, 145 note; *Iwain*, pp. 128, 129; *Sir Perceval*, 1861 ff.

⁶ Cf. ll. 4867 ff., 4885-86.

⁷ *Voyage of Bran*, I, 83. See also Hertel, *op. cit.*: on girdles, pp. 67-68; on rings, pp. 62-65.

In l. 1851 she explains its virtues thus, "quat gome so is gorde with pis grene lace" cannot be killed. In 1860 it is called a "belt," in 1874 "þe luf-lace," and in 2030 the "lace." In 2033 ff. we are told how Gawain first wore it:

Penn dressed he his drurye double hym aboute;
Swyþe sweþled vmbe his swange swetely þat knyȝt
þe gordel of þe grene silke, þat gay wel bisemed.

In 2037-39 the poet speaks of the "gordel" and its "pendaunteȝ" of gold. In 2358 the lace is called a "wouen girdel," in 2377 a "belt," in 2395 a "gurdel," and again in 2429 a "gordel." In 2497 and 2505 it is called "þe lace." Then, after the Green Knight has reproved Gawain for his failure to reveal the gift of the girdle to him in accordance with their agreement, and Gawain has accepted it from the knight again, we are told how Gawain wore it:

& þe blykkande belt he bere þeraboute,
A-belef as a bauderyk, bounden bi his syde
Loken under his lyfte arme, þe lace, with a knot [ll. 2485 ff.].

And finally when the lords and ladies of the Round Table adopt it they agree that

Vche burne of þe broþer-hede a bauderyk schulde haue,
A bende, a-belef hym aboute, of a bryȝt grene [l. 2516 f.].

It is to be noticed that up to l. 2485 the lace is referred to always as a lace, a girdle, or a belt, and it seems to have been worn as a belt about the waist (cf. ll. 1830, 2032). After the Green Knight has reproved him, however, Gawain seems to have changed the manner of wearing it; at any rate from that point the manner of wearing it is described twice in terms not previously used: it was worn "a-belef as a bauderyk." Now, though the word "baldric" sometimes means a collar (*Concise Oxford Dictionary*), its most distinctive meaning is "a belt hung from shoulder to opposite hip." The other expression, *a-belef*, occurs in English only in these two passages. The *New English Dictionary* derives it from O.F. *à belif*, *beslif* (=Late Latin **bislíquus* = *obliquus*), and gives it the meanings, "obliquely, aslant, scarfwise." The poet then seems to say that Gawain and the lords and ladies wore the lace not as a girdle, but as a baldric obliquely from one shoulder to the left side ("loken under his lyfte arme").

This conclusion I base upon two facts: the change in the description of the method of wearing the girdle, and the meanings of *baldric* and *a-belef*.¹

Further, no reason is given for the change in method of wearing the lace; it is not motivated in any way in the poem. One might surmise, to be sure, that Gawain wore it as a baldric in order to display it more prominently in penance for his sin; but no such reason is given. If no reason is given for this change, then, it is fair to conclude that the motive for the change must lie outside the poem, that in fact the poem was written in honor of some order which had a baldric as a badge. This reasoning is confirmed by the analogy of the *Green Knight*. There the color of the lace is changed from green to white, and at the end we are told that this story gives the reason for the wearing of a white lace on the shoulder by Knights of the Bath. If the shift there is motivated outside the story, one might suppose that the shift in *GGK* was likewise motivated. Certainly it would have been simpler for the poet to have had the lace worn throughout as a belt, than to make a change near the end. One more fact about the lace—it was certainly green. In ll. 1832, 1851, 2035, 2396, 2517 it is definitely characterized as green. Further, there is a reason for its being green: it is obviously green because the Green Knight wore green. This connection is definitely stated in the Knight's remark about the lace that "hit is grene as my goune" (l. 2396). And the Knight wears green because he is an Other World creature. Were

¹ In an article in *Anglia*, XXXVII, 414 ff., the author fails to note this difference between the way in which the lady and Gawain first wore the lace, and the way in which Gawain and the knights later wore it. He says: "It is usual to translate 'bauderyk' as baldrick. A baldrick, however, is not worn round the loins, though it is worn slantwise across the breast, hung across one shoulder. We hope to prove immediately that it is the military belt, the Garter belt in fact," etc. This Garter belt was, he says, worn about the hips. Finally he remarks: "It is hardly necessary to labor the point about the belt further, even if the ballad of the *Green Knight* already referred to, did not state bluntly and inartistically—

That is the matter and the case
Why knyghts of the Bath wear the lace."

That is certainly very curious writing and very curious reasoning. "Bauderyk" is not translated "baldrick"; it is the same word. And the author makes no effort to reconcile a baldric with the belt which he describes; they are obviously dissimilar. Then how the fact that the *Green Knight* says that Knights of the Bath wear a white lace proves that in *GGK* Knights of the Garter wore a belt, I confess I can't see. If the argument is by analogy it doesn't hold, for in the *Green Knight* the description of the lace (it is *white* there) and the method of wearing it exactly correspond to the lace of the Knights of the Bath and their manner of wearing it, whereas in *GGK* the baldric is similar neither in color nor in method of wearing to the belt of the Garter.

it not for the fact that the green insisted on in this poem has a meaning, is derived from the primitive story, one might suppose that green was merely a code-word for another color, and that the initiate might supply for it *blue*, the color of the Garter, or some other color. But this is not the case, the green is original. Hence it seems to me certain that we must assume that the order for which *GGK* was written had among its badges a *baldric* that was *green*.

That the story of *GGK* was connected with some order has been inferred from the situation at the end. After Gawain has told in a self-abased fashion the story of the lace, the poet writes:

Ʒe kyng comferteȝ Ʒe knyȝt, & alle Ʒe court als,
 Laȝen loude Ʒer-at, & lufflyly acorden,
 Ʒat lordes & ladiȝ, Ʒat longed to Ʒe Table,
 Vche burne of Ʒe broȝer-hede a bauderyk schulde haue,
 A bende, a-belef hym aboute, of a bryȝt grene,
 & Ʒat, for sake of Ʒat segge, in swete to were.
 For Ʒat watȝ acorded Ʒe renoun of Ʒe Rounde Table,
 & he honoured Ʒat hit hade, euer-more after.

This passage seems to point to the wearing of a green baldric by some courtly group. That this group was the Order of the Garter has been more or less tentatively suggested for some time. So Professor Schofield says that the knights' wearing the lace "seems to have been suggested by the establishment of the Order of the Garter about 1348."¹ Professor Gollancz in his *Cambridge History* article (p. 366) remarks that "the whole poem may be connected with the foundation of the Order of the Garter" about 1345. So far as I can see, there are three main reasons for connecting the poem with the Garter: (1) the fact that at the end of the poem appears in the MS "hony soyt qui mal pence"; (2) the knights who adopt the lace are members of the Round Table, and Edward III in founding the Order of the Garter established it merely as a continuation of the Round Table; (3) the derivation of the lace from an intrigue with a lady resembles the famous story of the Countess of Salisbury and her garter. The first of these is unconvincing since the motto is written in a later hand, and probably represents merely someone's guess as to the relation of the story to the Garter. Unless it can

¹ *Eng. Lit.*, p. 217.

be corroborated by other testimony it is worthless as evidence. The third is also valueless because the story of the Countess of Salisbury is late (first given by Polydore Vergil) and discredited by historians of the order.¹ The second, though it seems at first sight more significant than either of the others, is probably just as unimportant. Because of the great repute of Arthur and the Round Table it would be natural for any new order to try to connect itself with him. In fact, the Order of the Garter was by no means the first revival of the Round Table. In 1279 Roger Mortimer held a Round Table at Kenilworth with a thousand knights and a thousand ladies. His descendant Roger Mortimer, Earl of March, who was all-powerful in the first few years of Edward III's reign, revived the Round Table again in 1328, and had among his guests the king and almost all the nobles of England.² Neither of these, of course, established a definite order; they merely held great fêtes. But it is to be noted that *GGK* does not demand a regular order; it would fit such an occasional celebration as those mentioned quite as well. Now if these elaborate festivities have survived to us in chronicles, it is not unlikely that many minor entertainments of the sort may have been held and not have been recorded.³ Furthermore, in 1351 King John of France founded the Order of the Star, "sur la manière de la Table Ronde qui fu jadis au temps dou roy artus."⁴ There is then in these three apparent evidences no real proof of connection between *GGK* and the Order of the Garter.

Not only is the supposition of such a connection not established by evidence, however: it is actually incompatible with the facts. I have shown that the poem gives as the badge of the "order" a green baldric. Now the Order of the Garter has no such badge. The Garter itself is blue; Froissart calls the Knights "les chevaliers

¹ See Beltz, *Memorials of the Order of the Garter*, p. xlii. It is to be noted further that the story is one likely to spring up in a chivalric age. A story which seems to be as baseless as that of the Countess of Salisbury is told about a lady who gave to Count Amedeo VI of Savoy a bracelet of hair which he used as a device of his order, the Order of the Collar. See *la Grande Encyclopédie*, III, 86; *Scottish Historical Review*, V, 405; *Monumenta Historiae Patriae*, V, col. 1005; III, col. 269 ff.

² *DNB*. See references there to *Ann. Mon.*, Rishanger, Knighton, and Hardyng. For references on Round Tables, see below, p. 142.

³ In the sixteenth century the Worshipful Society of Archers in London is said to celebrate yearly the memory of Arthur and the Order of the Round Table. See dedication to the translation of John Leland's *Assertio inclytissimi Arturii Regis*, London, 1582.

⁴ Froissart, *ed. cit.*, V, 308.

du Bleu Gertier."¹ So far as the authorities show, no part of the equipment of Knights of the Garter was green. In other words, the one distinctive feature which is demanded in *GGK* is not found at all in the Order of the Garter.² Secondly, the poem seems to be connected with a Christmas-New Year celebration. The Order of the Garter held its feasts on St. George's Day. Thirdly, the celebrations of the Garter were held at Windsor, and, as far as the knights used English, we should expect them to use the London dialect. Why then is the poem in a Northwestern dialect?³

From these considerations it is clear that we have no reason to suppose a connection between *GGK* and the Garter. We could

¹ Froissart, *ed. cit.*, IV, 205.

² Recently an elaborate attempt has been made by Mr. Isaac Jackson to establish *GGK* as a "Garter Poem": *Anglia*, XXXVII, 393-423. The author's argument seems to me so illogical and unconvincing as scarcely to require refutation. For example, he tries to show that the Garter feast was like the feast in *GGK* (pp. 399-400). The parallels (condensed) are:

GARTER	GGK
The brotherhood heard matins and at the end offered gold and silver.	Arthur and his knights went to chapel. Afterward they exchanged New Year's gifts.
The knights washed before dinner. "The first mess was placed on the table before the king entered."	The knights washed before dinner. "Bot Arthure wolde note ete til all were served." (He was in the hall, however.)
Trumpets, drums, and fifes played. The queen was often there. Two knights had a mess between them.	Trumpets, drums, and fifes played. Guenore was on the dais. Two knights had a mess between them.
On the election of a knight, he is invested and goes to chapel bare-headed.	In 590 ff. Gawain is armed (before going on his adventure—he has of course long been a Knight of the Round Table), and does not put on his helmet until he has heard mass.

Obviously the similarities here are merely the requirements of etiquette. In *MSF*, *Perceval*, and countless romances well-bred people wash their hands before eating. See Kölbing, *Tristram*, II, 541, 543; Zielke, *Sir Orfeo*, p. 17; *Libeaus Desconus*, V, 111 ff. Schofield, *PMLA*, XV, 145. Naturally people heard mass bare-headed.

The author tells us a good deal about Joan of Kent, wife of the Black Prince, and calls her "the Garter heroine," but he gives no evidence to show that she was connected in any way with *GGK* (pp. 409-10). He says, "the poem glorifies the Black Prince," but gives as evidence only a most doubtful interpretation of Gawain's shield. He tries to show that the lace was a wedding favor of Joan's, but his only evidence is that "there has been a custom for hundreds of years past to wear the bride's garters or scarves or ribbons as wedding favors," that at the entertainment provided for Queen Elizabeth in 1575 "lustie lads" wore "blu buchram bride-lace upon a branch of green broom" (pp. 419 ff.), and that one of the participants in this entertainment was called the "Black Prince." Such material refutes itself.

³ Mr. Jackson (p. 395) argues that *GGK* must have been written after 1362, since the title "Duke of Clarence" did not exist until that year, and hence the reference to the Duke of Clarence in *GGK*, l. 553, could not have been made before. But Sir Frederick Madden in his *Syr Gawayn*, p. 313, pointed out that a Duke of Clarence exists in the French romances. See *le Roman de Merlin*, ed. Sommer, 1894, p. 134. A city of Clarence is mentioned frequently in this romance (which is dated about 1316 by the editor), and its siege forms an important episode. See pp. 313, 409, 419, 425, etc.

assume a relation only if there were no other order to be found. That is, of course, not the case; we know of many chivalric orders in the fourteenth century. In particular, it will be remembered that in the *Green Knight* the green lace was changed to a white one and the whole poem made to explain a custom of the Knights of the Bath. With regard to this Mr. Hales remarked: "It was made to explain a custom of that time—a custom followed by an order that was instituted, according to Selden and Camden, some three-quarters of a century (A.D. 1399) after the time when, according to Mr. Morris, the poem first appeared."¹ Professor Gollancz, after stating that *GGK* was probably connected with the foundation of the Garter, adds that the later poet "has used the same story to account for the origin of the order of the Bath."² Mr. Isaac Jackson states: "The whole ballad is a clumsy adaptation of the romance story to glorify another knightly order, founded in the next century."³ Is this explanation likely? It requires us to suppose that a poem associated with the oldest, most honored of English knightly orders was remade to apply to a kind of knights (not an order) which never had the great dignity of the Garter.⁴ Such a process seems highly unlikely. Further, it is to be observed that the Order of the Bath was not founded in 1399 as is assumed above. In fact no definite Order of the Bath was founded until modern times (1725). But the Knights of the Bath go back to a very early period. The authorities are agreed in regarding them as merely knights somewhat more formally created than ordinary knights bachelors. The date 1399 derives its significance from the fact that we have in that year first record of the use of the white lace and other distinctive equipment (including a green robe) in Henry IV's creation of certain knights on the Saturday before his coronation. There is evidence of earlier date that knights were created by an elaborate ceremonial including the bath which gives to these knights their special title. Even as far back as King John a list of garments prepared for the knighting of one Thomas Sturmy includes items similar to those mentioned in 1399, among them a green robe.⁵ Similar entries occur from time to time. In Nicolas,

¹ *PFM*, II, 56.

² *Cambridge History*, I, 366.

³ *Anglia*, XXXVII, 417.

⁴ This point was suggested to me by Professor Manly.

⁵ Selden, *Titles of Honor* (1631).

Orders of Knighthood, III, p. 7, entries for 1204, 1209, 1303, and 1326 are given. In each of these mention is made, among other garments, of a green robe. Of these knights Cockayne writes:

The full solemnities for conferring knighthood seem to have been so largely and so early superseded by the practice of dubbing or giving the accolade that in England it became at last restricted to such knights as were made at coronations and some other occasions of state. And to them the particular name of Knights of the Bath was given.¹

Now, if, as the authorities think, Knights of the Bath were being created early in the fourteenth century, we have even less reason for supposing that the *Green Knight* was altered in the fifteenth century from a poem in honor of the Garter to fit an "order" which existed at the time the original *GGK* was written. On the other hand, the connection of the *Green Knight* with the Knights of the Bath would lead one rather to suppose that *GGK* likewise was connected with the Knights of the Bath. Then the remodeling would not be a shift of the story from one order to another, but merely a modernization of the story for the same order. Certainly green is connected with the Knights of the Bath as it is not with the Garter. But what of the white lace? I cannot answer with certainty. There seems to be no evidence for the existence of the white lace before 1399. Possibly before that a green baldric had been used: for some reason it may have been changed to a white lace, and the story altered to fit this change. Even though I have no proof of the existence of a green baldric, the likelihood of connection between *GGK* and the Bath is far stronger than that of connection between the poem and the Garter, because of the certain relation of the *Green Knight* and the fact that green figures in the robes of Knights of the Bath.

The possibilities are not restricted, however, to the Knights of the Bath alone. Many orders were instituted in the fourteenth century in different countries of Europe, and there is no reason to suppose that *GGK* must necessarily be connected with an English order. A study of fourteenth-century history, or even a cursory reading of Froissart, indicates at once the internationalism of the time. The Black Prince and John of Gaunt were fighting in France and Spain

¹ *Encyclopedia Britannica*, s.v., "Knighthood."

for years, were in alliance with various princes and nobles, and may have been elected to almost any French or Spanish order. It is actually reported that in 1393 the King of France bestowed an order on Richard II, John of Gaunt, and other Englishmen.¹ English free lances were fighting all over the Continent, and it will be shown later that at least one of these was a member of a foreign order. Now any English knight returning home from abroad with a foreign order may have given the suggestion for *GK* to the English poet. Such a source would most naturally explain the later shift of the story to the Knights of the Bath, because the foreign order would have meaning only for the knight who was a member of it, and hence it would soon be forgotten. It is also to be noted that the order need not have been a widely known or a permanent one. At its foundation it would seem worthy of commemoration in a poem; if it died out within a few years we can understand all the more readily the fact that later its connection with the poem was forgotten, and that now it is difficult to discover certainly the order concerned. Some idea of the great number of orders existing in the fourteenth century can be gained by a glance through the section on extinct orders in Cibrario, II, 306 ff. The list is, of course, not complete; probably many orders of which we have no information at all were founded during the fourteenth century. At any rate here are some examples of orders found during that time: Duke John IV of Brittany, the Order of the Ermine, 1381; Ingelram de Coucy, Earl of Bedford, Order of the Crown, 1390; Albert of Bavaria, Count of Hainault, Order of St. Anthony, 1382; Alfonso XI of Castile, Order of the Band, 1332; King John of France, Order of the Star, 1351; Louis of Taranto, Order of the Holy Spirit, 1352; Louis II, Duke of Bourbon, Order of the Shield of Gold, 1369; Louis of France, Duke of Orleans, Order of the Porcupine, 1394; Emperor Sigismund, Order of the Dragon, end of fourteenth century; Count of Burgundy, Cavaliers of St. George, end of fourteenth century; Boucicaut, Marshal of France, Order of the White Lady with the Green Shield.² Several of these orders use green in some way in their devices, but none meets the requirement of a green baldric. Of all the orders which I have been able to find anything

¹ Cibrario, *Ordini cavallereschi*, II, 326.

² Cibrario, *loc. cit.*; *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de France*, I^e Série, II, 254.

about, however, the one which most nearly agrees with the conditions of *GGK* is the Order of the Collar, founded in 1362 by Count Amedeo VI of Savoy. As the circumstances are rather curious in themselves, and offer some possibility of connection with *GGK*, I shall go into them in detail.

At the age of nine years Amedeo VI became Count of Savoy in 1342. The first notable incident in his career is a tournament at which he seems first to have shown his fondness for dressing himself entirely in green. The old French chronicler describes it as follows:

Le comte Ame vint sur le reng a tout ses onze compagnons, tous vestus de cendal vert, et leurs chivaux couers de mesmes, et sy y avoit douze dames, vestues et parees de mesmes, ensemble celles brides et garnisons, et avoient les douze dames douze cordons de soye verde chacune menant son chivallier attache a la bride, et le heaulme en la teste, et la lance au point, et tout couert de verd.

Arrived at the lists, the ladies released their knights and retired; at the end of the day they returned and led the combatants to the castle. The tournament lasted three days, and during the whole time the count and his companions were clad in green. After this time, the count continued to wear the color: "et depuis lon laissa le nom du conte Ame et fust appellees le conte Verd." In fact he is called the Green Count in books of reference and histories to this day.

Apparently it was in 1362 that the Green Count established the Order of the Collar. The order was founded in honor of the fifteen joys of the Virgin, and hence it comprised fifteen knights. The collar was made of gold with interlacing leaves of laurel enameled green, and a pendant below composed of three love-knots interlaced. The Count founded the order at a feast held after mass, and as part of the celebration there were tournaments and feasts lasting three days. In connection with the feast, "momeries" are mentioned. Among the first members of the order were Guillaume de Granscon (father of Oto de Granson, Chaucer's acquaintance), who was a prominent member of the Count's court, and an English knight, Richard Musard, who was the Count's standard-bearer. In 1366 the Count led a crusade, which had as its final result the freeing of the Eastern Emperor from captivity. On his embarkation from Venice, the

Count, dressed in green silk embroidered with love knots, and accompanied by lords and ladies similarly adorned, marched through the square of St. Mark's to his ships. In 1368 the Green Count met Lionel, Duke of Clarence, at Paris, accompanied the latter to his own capital at Chambéry, entertained him there lavishly for several days, and finally conveyed him to Milan. There he assisted at the marriage of Lionel and Violante, daughter of Galeazzo Visconti and Amedeo's sister. On one occasion Lionel acted as second to Amedeo in a duel. The Count died of the plague in 1383.¹

It is clear that this order does not exactly correspond to the one indicated in *GGK*, but it comes very close. The badge is not a baldric but a collar; otherwise the correspondence is exact. As in *GGK*, the collar contains green and gold and has a pendant; to be sure, the green is enamel, not silk, but we must remember that the description of the collar applies probably to that article as it existed in 1416, and probably at first it was made of some simple substance like silk rather than of gold and enamel. One cannot help connecting the collar with the green ribbons by which the ladies led the knights to the tournament, and those ribbons were of silk. Further, the order was founded in honor of the Virgin, and in this respect fits the conditions of *GGK* better than the Garter does. Finally, it can be shown that the counts of Savoy were accustomed to observe New Year's with feasts. In one case mention is made that the Green Knight went home for the feast at New Year's.²

There are sufficient connections between Savoy and England to make the transmission of the story of *GGK* understandable. As already indicated, Oto de Granson's father was one of the founders. Hence it is possible that the younger Granson, a poet himself, may have brought the story to England when in 1374 he became one of John of Gaunt's retinue.³ Or the story may have been brought to England by one of the knights who attended Lionel on his visit to

¹ The chief authority on the Green Count is *Monumenta Historiae Patriae*, III, col. 269 ff.—a French chronicle dated by the editor about 1416. See also Alethea Wiel, *The Romance of the House of Savoy*, I, 192 ff.; M. Read, *Historical Studies in Vaud*, etc., I, 61; Cibrario, *Ordini cavallereschi*, I; Muratori, *Scriptores*, XVI (see Index); Froissart, *ed. cit.*, VII, 246-47.

² *Monumenta Hist. Patr.*, III, col. 340. For the connection of the pentangle with Savoy, see below, p. 152.

³ *Registers of J. of G.* (Camden Society), p. 300.

Milan. The Duke of Clarence was accompanied by 457 men on this occasion.¹ Perhaps Lionel and some of his followers were made knights of the order; as no records of it for that time have been preserved, we know nothing about the members from the time of the founding to a late period. At any rate, such a theory would account for the complimentary reference to the Duke in the poem. Or, the English knight Musard, or some Englishman later introduced into the order, may have brought the story to England.

For the sketch just given, I do not claim anything except that it is a possibility. If one must refer *GGK* to some particular order, the Order of the Collar meets the conditions better than the Garter does, but that is all. It must be noted that the poem does not certainly refer to an *order*; it may have been written for some such celebration as the two made by the Mortimers which I have mentioned above. A kind of tournament called a Round Table was frequently held in the Middle Ages.² The exact nature of it is not very well known, but possibly a poem may have been composed in connection with such an occasion. As the Mortimers are the only persons, aside from Edward III, who are mentioned in history as having held Round Tables in England, it would be fair to suggest that perhaps *GGK* was written to commemorate some unrecorded Round Table held by a Mortimer. The family had important estates in Wales, and its chief representatives, the earls of March, from 1369 on acted as viceroys of Ireland; hence they were in direct contact with Celtic fields. In 1368, Edmund Mortimer, Earl of March, married Philippa, daughter and heiress of Lionel, Duke of Clarence; and his son, Roger, who succeeded him as earl in 1369, was thus the heir of Lionel. Roger was earl until his death in Ireland in 1398. Obviously, if the mention of the Duke of Clarence in the poem is meant as a compliment to someone, the supposition that *GGK* was connected with a Round Table held by the Earl of March would fitly explain the allusion.

Another possibility, which so far as I know has never been suggested, though it must have occurred to many people, is that *GGK*

¹ Rymer, *Foedera* (old edition), VI, 590.

² See L. F. Mott, *PMLA*, XX, 231; Schultz, *op. cit.*, II, 117; Du Cange, *s.v. Tabula Rotunda*. Round Tables are mentioned in at least two French romances, *la Comtesse d'Anjou* and *Sone de Nansai*; see Langlois, *la Société française d'après dix romans d'aventure*, pp. 239, 277.

was written not for an order but for a Christmas-New Year's celebration. There is a very special insistence on that season of the year, and the sports and pleasures connected with it, throughout the poem. The writer was greatly interested in that feature of his work and gained some of his most charming effects in the descriptions incident to it. I need hardly dwell upon the description of the gaiety of Arthur's court at Christmas and the exchange of New Year's gifts (ll. 37 ff.). The entrance of the Green Knight, his strange proposition, and its result, all have the curiously fantastic effect of a bit of Christmas mummary. Arthur himself mentions that fact. Though somewhat troubled by the adventure, he says:

Wel by-commes such craft vpon cristmasse,
Laykyng of enterludeȝ, to laȝe & to syng,
Amonge rise kynde caroles of knyȝteȝ & ladyeȝ [ll. 471-73].

Similarly in l. 683 the beheading game is classed among "cryst-masse gomneȝ." Then when Gawain reaches the strange castle, he finds himself in the midst of a holiday celebration. We have several pretty scenes, among them one in which the singing of "coundutes of krystmasse, & caroleȝ newe" is mentioned (l. 1655). After Gawain has survived the test, the Green Knight urges him to return to the castle that they may "reuel þe remnaunt of þys ryche fest" (l. 2401). It would scarcely be possible to get more of a holiday spirit into a poem than this writer does. Further, it is possible that the long descriptions of the hunts may be motivated in this connection. If the poem was written to be read at a Christmas "house-party" in a castle, what would be more fitting than descriptions of midwinter hunting of just the type that some of the guests would have been engaged in? In such a case the green lace may have been merely a device worn temporarily in connection with the festivities.

A further support for this theory is the fact that the connection with Christmas is special to *GGK* (and the *Green Knight*); it does not occur in the *Fled Bricrend*, the *Perlesvaus*, the *Perceval*, or *MSF*.

It would seem possible then that *GGK* was written as a substitute for the ordinary Christmas mummeries, or as a complement to them, on some particular occasion.¹ Because of the dialect in which

¹ That plays were performed at Christmas is well known. Cf. Gayley, *Representative English Comedies*, I, xl, xlii; Nicolas, *History of the Orders of Knighthood*, I, 12 ff., 43 (records of Edward III's time).

GGK is written, and because we do not know that alliterative verse was cultivated at court, it would seem most probable that the celebration for which it was written was held by some great noble rather than the king. As to who that noble was, I see no evidence except the reference to the Duke of Clarence. Though such a title is found in the French romances, it may be meant here as a compliment to Lionel. Unfortunately I know of no household accounts or other detailed records of Lionel or his heirs, the Mortimers.

In any case it seems certain that the poem was written for a Christmas celebration. It should be remarked, however, that it may also be connected with an order which held celebrations at Christmas time.

The final result of this discussion cannot be certainty. It can establish with some firmness the proposition that *GGK* is not a "Garter poem"; but it can offer in exchange merely possibilities. Perhaps some time an investigator may discover some situation which is surely the occasion for which *GGK* was written; perhaps the suggestion with regard to the Order of the Collar is the correct one; but it is quite possible that no information with regard to the order or the occasion for which the poem was written has been preserved. There were many orders and many private devices in the fourteenth century, and information about them is very difficult to get. Note, for example, the impossibility of getting facts, outside of certain poems, as to the orders of the Flower and of the Leaf.¹ Similar badges and devices were extremely common. Richard II's white hart, and the Bohun swan are well known, but many others existed about which we now know little or nothing. For example, Thomas, Baron Berkeley, on his brass of 1392 wears a collar composed of mermaids, about which nothing certain is known; Anne of Bohemia on her tomb in Westminster wears a peculiar knot; the study of a wardrobe account of Richard II (1393-94) suggests that green and white were Richard's livery colors, but they are not recorded as such; on funeral monuments and jewelry of the fourteenth century in England appears an eagle in such a way as to suggest that there was once a military order whose device was an eagle.² It is possible that

¹ See Dr. G. L. Marsh's dissertation. It is barely possible that *GGK* was connected with the Order of the Flower, whose color was green.

² C. Boutell, *Heraldry*, p. 298; Mrs. B. Palliser, *Historic Devices*, etc., p. 365; *Archæologia*, LXII, 503; and LXI, 166.

the green baldric of *GGK* was a badge used by some noble or some group of people for a short time, and then entirely forgotten.

There are, therefore, the following possibilities: that *GGK* was connected with the Knights of the Bath, with the Order of the Collar, or with some order not yet pointed out; that the poem was written to celebrate some social occasion, such as a Round Table, or Christmas festivities, and that its device, the green lace, was merely a badge used temporarily; or finally, that the poem was written for an individual patron, whose personal badge was a green baldric.

V. THE PENTANGLE

One of the most curious passages of *GGK* is that in which the pentangle on Gawain's shield is described and explained. It constitutes, in fact, practically the only digression in the poem. Elsewhere scarcely a word is wasted; every incident and every description contribute directly to the effect. But beginning with l. 619, the poet devotes fifty-one lines merely to emphasizing and explaining allegorically the device on Gawain's shield. That this is no real part of his tale, the poet acknowledges:

& quy þe pentangel apendeȝ to þat prynce noble
I am in-tent yow to telle, þof tary hyt me schulde.

We are told then that Gawayne's shield was of gules with a pentangle of gold, and the image of the Virgin upon it. As to the last-mentioned item it is important to observe that the figure of the Virgin is mentioned but once and occupies only three lines out of the fifty-one. It might actually have been inserted by a scribe; at any rate, the poet is not interested in it, for whereas he explains the allegorical allusion of the pentangle and describes the pentangle in detail twice, he mentions the image only once.

The origins of the pentangle are very hard to trace, but the ideas attached to it in the Middle Ages are undoubtedly from two sources—Semitic legend and Greek philosophy. According to talmudic story Solomon was a great magician, and had power over all spirits and devils.¹ His power was vested in a seal ring; when deprived of this by the prince of the devils Ashmedai, he became a wanderer. A

¹ See von Vincenti, *Die A. E. Dialoge von Salomon und Saturn*, pp. 5 ff., and the articles in the bibliography there, pp. ix ff., especially Eisenmenger and Weil. See also Salzberger, *Die Salomo Saga*.

similar story appears in the Koran, and there we are told that the ring derived its power from the unutterable name of God which was cut upon it. Solomon presses this seal upon the neck of evil spirits in making them his slaves. In 1137 Petrus Diaconus stated that the ring was to be seen in the church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem. At some time later than the composition of the Talmud and the Koran, developed the idea that Solomon's seal bore a six-pointed star made of two interlaced triangles.¹ The Arabs are said to have engraved this figure on the bottom of their drinking-cups.² The same device developed among the Jews under the name of David's shield,³ appearing in literary sources first in the twelfth century. In recent times it has been adopted by various Jewish societies and is now widely used as a symbol of Judaism.

In the Middle Ages this device and the name "Solomon's seal" became confused with the pentangle (pentacle, pentalpha, pentagramma), a five-pointed star with the lines of construction retained. This sign seems to have derived its mystic significance from the facts that it can be made by one continuous movement of the pen, that it is composed of three triangles, and that it has five points. At any rate it was used by the Pythagoreans as a symbol of health.⁴ They may also have regarded it as a symbol of truth, and as a protection against evil.⁵ It appears on certain coins of Pitane in place of Hygeia, is on at least one Etruscan coin, and is to be found on coins in Gaul.⁶ It was also used as a symbol by the Gnostics and appears on Abraxas stones, which were in effect amulets.⁷ Perhaps as early

¹ Renaud, *Description des monuments musulmans du cabinet du Duc de Blacas*, Paris, II, 52.

² *Jewish Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Solomon's Seal."

³ *Jewish Encyclopedia*, s.v., "Magen Dawid"; also Fabricius, *Codex Pseudepigraphicus*, pp. 1007 ff.

⁴ See Pauly, *Real-Encyclopädie*, s.v. "Pentagon"; Fowler's translation of Lucian, II, 6.

⁵ See S. Günther, *Bull. di bibliogr. e delle scienze matem.*, VI, 313 ff., where evidence of the use of the pentagram among the Pythagoreans is given—in particular a quotation from a scholiast on Aristophanes, and a story of a Pythagorean who when told of the death of someone made the sign of the pentagram; see also Günther, *Vermischte Beiträge z. Gesch. des Math.*, 1876, p. 2. Even before this it is found on amulets. Cf. Wesely, *Neue Zauberpapyri*, pp. 68, 70 and note.

⁶ Pauly, *loc. cit.*; MacDonald, *Greek Coins in Hunterian Collection*, Vols. I and II; Inman, *Ancient Pagan and Modern Christian Symbolism*, p. 40.

⁷ For full discussion and bibliography see Pauly, *loc. cit.*; Cabrol, *Dictionnaire d'archéologie*, etc.

as this it had become connected with Solomon; at any rate its power as an amulet would suggest such a possibility. That it was connected with Solomon in the Middle Ages is demonstrated by many circumstances. In particular there is a work extant in Latin, German, and French, generally called *Claviculae Salomonis*, which treats of "all kinds of pentacles."¹ Albertus Magnus seems to have known of this work, for he mentions four books of magic said to be by Solomon, and in connection with them a "sigillum ad demoniacos."² A work called *Enchiridion Leonis Papae*, which Albertus also mentions, is said to give the name "pentacle" to a seal pressed on parchment or engraved on precious metal.³ Trithemius also mentions the *Clavicula Salomonis* and a *Liber pentaculorum*.⁴ In all these cases the pentangle seems to be connected with magic. So it is also in later examples. Schindler quotes a long passage from Agrippa of Nettesheim (1533) in which its uses are explained and its powers against evil spirits and enemies emphasized.⁵ Alstedius (1620) knew it under the name of *Trudenfuss*, and Kepler (1619) reports that Paracelsus knew the *stella pentagonica* or *pes trutta*. The name *Trudenfuss* implies, as will be obvious later, that the device was in use as a protection against evil spirits.⁶

How early the pentangle became connected with Christianity is by no means clear. It appears in the Cimitero di Pretestato at Rome with two other signs, and of the three De Rossi says: "Questi sono segni arcani di Cristo e della sua croce salutarifera."⁷ It is likewise thought to be connected with certain old Christian phylacteria,⁸ but of course in such isolated cases it may be merely a remnant of

¹ *Jewish Enc.*, s.v. "Magen Dawid," and "Solomon's Seal"; Fabricius, *op. cit.*, p. 1051; Madden, *Sir Gawayne*, p. 318. The Hebrew form of it has been published recently by the Oxford Press under the title *Mafteah Shelomo*, ed. H. Gollancz. My friend Dr. T. A. Knott has examined for me an English manuscript of the seventeenth century (Sloan 3825 Plut. CIII. F.), which contains some seventy-two designs used in conjuring spirits. Among them is the "Pentagonall figure of Solomon," a pentangle inscribed in a circle, with the mystic word "Tetragrammaton," and other signs and words on it. The figure is to be worn on the breast to preserve the wearer from danger.

² *Opera Omnia*, ed. Borgnet, X, 641-42.

³ *Nouveau Larousse*, s.v. "Pentacle."

⁴ Fabricius, *loc. cit.*

⁵ Schindler, *Aberglaube des Mittelalters*, p. 124. See also Scot, *Disc. of Witch.*, Ap. II, pp. 533-34.

⁶ Chasles, *Aperçu historique*, pp. 478 ff.

⁷ *Roma sotterranea cristiana*, I, 171.

⁸ J. C. Luzi, *Röm. Quartalschr. f. Christl. Alterthumsk.*, I, 208.

heathendom. By the fifteenth century it was certainly Christian, because it was used then on the seal of the Carmelite Priory of Aberdeen and in the external spaces around it appear the five letters *M A R I A*.¹ In 1630 Alstedius says that the pentangle was written by superstitious people with the five letters of the name *Iesus* distributed about the five points.² Bishop Kennett says that "when it was delineated on the body of a man, it was supposed to touch and point out the five wounds of Christ."³ Various modern writers state that the pentangle symbolized the five wounds of Christ, but I have been unable to find definite evidence of this in mediaeval sources.⁴ Two modern German writers state that the pentangle is a symbol of truth, but they give no evidence for this, and I have been unable to find any.⁵

In modern folklore the pentangle still retains its old value as a protection against evil influences. Under the names *Drudenfuss* (or *Trudenfuss*) and *Alpenfuss* it is widely known in Germany. It is drawn on doors to keep witches away, painted on cradles to prevent the *schlenz* from sucking the babies dry, put on the under side of loaves of bread before they are cut, etc.⁶ The figure is popularly supposed to represent the imprint of a witch's foot. From the Germans, apparently, this superstition has spread to the Slavs of Croatia.⁷ The pentangle is stamped on pottery in modern Greece,⁸ and under the name of Solomon's seal is a favorite amulet against fascination in Portugal and Madeira.⁹ Finally, it was formerly in use in Wales much as it is still in Germany.¹⁰

¹ W. de Gray Birch, *Seals*, p. 227; D. Laing, *Ancient Scottish Seals*, p. 193.

² Günther, *Bullet. di bibliogr. e delle scienze matem.*, VI, 331.

³ Lean, *Collectanea*, II, 427.

⁴ Schindler, *loc. cit.*; Mackay and Singleton, *History of Free Masonry*, II, 800. It occurs as a Mason's mark in Furness Abbey, Malmesbury, and many other places; see *Archaeologia*, XXX, p. 114.

⁵ Creutzer, *Symbolik u. Mythologie*, Part 6, p. 221; Ersch-Grüber, *Encyclopädie*, s.v. "Alpenfuss." F. Krauss, in *Anthropophyteia*, VII, 293-94, gives a phallic origin for the device. He refers to two works on masonry not accessible to me.

⁶ Meyer, *Germanische Mythologie*, pp. 78, 79. Meyer thinks this use has developed since the seventeenth century, but see evidence above. Cf. Grimm, *Mythology*, Eng. trans., pp. 1803, 1810; Ersch-Grüber, *Enc.*, under "Alpenfuss" and "Druden"; Schindler, *loc. cit.* Note its force in Goethe's *Faust*. See Paul's *Grd.*,² III, 268.

⁷ Krauss, *Slavische Volk-Forschungen*, p. 148.

⁸ Lawson, *Modern Greek Folk Lore*, pp. 113, 406.

⁹ *Folk Lore*, XIX, pp. 217, 219, 220.

¹⁰ Marie Trevelyan, *Folk Lore and Folk Stories of Wales*, p. 234.

I have been unable to find anything about the use of this symbol in England, except the references to it in such learned authors as Ben Jonson, Reginald Scot, and Sir Thomas Browne,¹ and its use in magic. The British Museum possesses a wax dish which once belonged to Dr. Dee. On it are inscribed first a heptagon, within that a seven-pointed star with the lines of construction retained, within that, a hexagon, and finally inside the latter a pentangle.² The discussions of the figure in the writings of Athelard of Bath and Thomas Bradwardine seem to be entirely on the geometry of it.³ The word "pantacle," however, occurs in the sixteenth-century English play *Damon and Pythias* with the meaning of "hand," a fact which speaks for its existence in common speech.⁴

It is clear then that from very early times the pentangle has been connected with Solomon, that it was widely known as a protection against evil forces, that it was probably a symbol of truth and of the five wounds of Christ.

Now, what is the meaning of the pentangle in *GGK*? Two writers have discussed the use of it there and have offered theories as to its meaning: Miss Weston in her *Legend of Sir Perceval* and Mr. Isaac Jackson in the article in *Anglia* already referred to. The pertinent passages from Miss Weston's book are as follows: "But now the hardest remains; he [Gawayne] must weld his sword, his Will power, and consciousness, to its hilt, the Pentangle, the mystic sign which gives power over the Unseen, so that, *holding his consciousness*, he may pass on to the highest plane, behold the Mystic 'Holy' Grail." "One thing, however, seems certain; Gawain must at a later period have fulfilled the conditions [for winning the Grail], for he bears the invincible sign, the Pentangle."⁵ Of course it is true that the pentangle "gives power over the Unseen." But as to the particular application of it which Miss Weston makes, I can see no proof: certainly there is nothing in the facts pointed out above

¹ See *NED*.

² See *Guide to the Mediaeval Room*, pp. 187-88.

³ Referred to in *Enc. Brit.*, XXII, 25. So also the discussions by Boethius and Kepler have nothing to do with its symbolic character. See Fazzari, *Breve storia della matematica*, pp. 223 ff., 243 ff.; Günther, *Bullet. di bibliogr. e delle scienze matem.*, VI, 313 ff.

⁴ Farmer's edition, p. 51. Farmer thinks it is a mistake for "pantofle."

⁵ *Loc. cit.*, II, 262-64.

concerning the pentangle which indicates that it was a sign of having "fulfilled the conditions." The inevitable comment on this discussion was made by Professor Ker in his review of Miss Weston's book:

The parts of it most open to challenge are those that would explain the Grail by means of occult science which the author herself does not profess to understand and with regard to which she has given no proofs. . . . She refers to oral tradition among occultists, "but no one will give me documentary evidence." "The fact, however, that a mystic . . . can . . . offer an explanation of the perplexing title, the Fisher King . . . is in itself matter for serious consideration" (p. 258). It may be so; but how is one to proceed with the consideration, if one does not know any occultists, and "no one will give me any documentary evidence"?¹

Mr. Jackson compares Gawain's shield in *GGK* with Arthur's arms in *Morte Arthure*.

Instead of the five golden crowns of the *Morte Arthur* banner Gawain has a golden pentangle. The poet proceeds very gravely to inform us that the pentangle was invented by Solomon as a token of truth—l. 625 f.—and the English call it "the endless knot" (l. 630).²

After discussing a few of its uses, Mr. Jackson continues:

Heraldric works of reference do not speak of a pentangle,³ yet a mullet, or spur-rowel, is practically a pentangle represented as a solid body. Moreover a mullet is one of the marks of cadency, that is, a sign used by sons or relatives to distinguish their arms from the paternal coat (Chambers' Encyclopedia, art. Heraldry); so that if King Arthur carries the Virgin on a gules field his nephew Gawain might very well carry the same arms with a golden mullet for difference. . . . The figure of the Virgin on Gawain's shield reminds us that the order of the Garter was founded in her honour.⁴ . . . The poem, then, may be taken as speaking very plainly to a XIVth century knight of its connection with the order of the Garter, and of the Black Prince as Sir Gawain.⁵

Dismissing for a moment the earlier part of Mr. Jackson's remarks, the reader should notice that last statement. What proof

¹ *Folk Lore*, XX, 502-3.

² Just what Mr. Jackson means by the phrasing of the first part of this sentence, I do not know. The poet is, of course, entirely right—according to mediaeval tradition Solomon did invent the pentangle.

³ Incorrect; see T. de Renesse, *Dictionnaire des figures héraldiques*, VII, 208, for a page of names of families which bore a pentangle on their shields. It does not seem to have been used in England.

⁴ This is of course unconvincing. Nearly all societies and orders in the Middle Ages were connected with the Virgin. In the case of the Order of the Garter, St. George is more emphasized than the Virgin.

⁵ *Anglia*, XXXVII, 410 ff.

does the pentangle afford of connection between *GGK* and the Order of the Garter? Simply the fact that the Virgin's picture is on the shield. What about the Black Prince as Sir Gawain? The pentangle offers nothing in favor of that supposition at all. In fact, if the pentangle is a mullet, and the mullet here indicates cadency, it would be especially inappropriate to the Black Prince, who was an eldest son. A more complete *non sequitur* than Mr. Jackson's conclusion could scarcely be found.

As to Mr. Jackson's interpretation of the pentangle in general, it is of course possible that the pentangle is merely a figurative way of describing a mullet. The mullet is a sign of cadency, particularly used of the third son.¹ Gawain is not a son of Arthur's, but possibly in a less exact heraldic system than the present he might, as nephew, be treated as a younger son.² It should be noticed, however, that the *Morte Arthure* gives Gawain an entirely different device—a griffon (l. 3869). What right have we to leave that out of consideration?

Further, certain features of the description stand against such a view. In the first place, where are the golden crowns of Arthur's arms? In the second place, what the poet says of the device is true of the pentangle and not of the mullet; the pentangle is connected with Solomon, it probably did symbolize truth, the five wounds of Christ, the five senses,³ and was in some way associated with the Virgin;⁴ and in his explanation of the form the poet seems to have in mind a pentangle. In the third place, the particular poet who composed the recension of the story as we have it in *GGK* did not understand that the more important figure in the shield was the image of Mary and not the mullet, for he devotes nearly all his attention to the latter. I am not particularly interested in proving that Mr. Jackson's interpretation is incorrect; I do not know any certainly correct interpretation; but I cannot overlook the difficulties of this view. It may be right, but it is by no means certainly so.

Another possibility is that we should understand the pentangle as a mullet, but not as a mark of cadency. Instead, it may be, as

¹ *NED*, s.v. "Mullet." So also all works on heraldry.

² On the importance of the relation of "sister's son" see Nitze, *Mod. Phil.*, IX, 298 ff. and references in note on p. 299.

³ This last connection is stated by Scot, *Disc. of Witch.*, Ap. II., 533-34.

⁴ Cf. the seal of the priory of Aberdeen, above, p. 148.

the author seems to conceive it, the only important figure on the shield. The figure occurs independently (not as a mark of cadency) on a few English coats of arms and on many Scottish shields. But it never occurs alone in the coloring of the Gawain poet on the arms of an important person. The nearest approaches are: in England, the famous arms of Vere, quarterly gules and or, a mullet argent in the first quarter; and in Scotland, Sutherland, gules, *three* mullets or. The arms of the Sutherlands are said to be derived in some way from a device used by Robert Bruce, whose daughter married an Earl of Sutherland.¹ The proper arms of the Bruces display a saltire and no mullet. But the arms of Robert Bruce, grandson of the great Robert, show a gold mullet on a red ground in addition to the saltire,² and on a copper plate belonging to the coffin of King Robert are four mullets about a cross.³ Perhaps he used the mullet as a badge.

There is still another possibility of heraldic interpretation: the description may refer to a pentangle actually worn as a device. So far as I have been able to discover, the pentangle has never been so used in England, but it does occur on the Continent. According to Rietstap, two families bore gules, a pentalpha or: a German family named Stahler, and a Swiss, named Bory d'Arnex. About the first I have been able to find nothing. The second, however, presents some curious facts. Since the beginning of the fifteenth century it has occupied estates in the Pays de Vaud, which were dependencies of the dukes of Savoy. Though it cannot be traced before the fifteenth century, the family may have extended back into the fourteenth century, or it may have acquired its arms from some other family resident in the domains of the counts of Savoy. At any rate, there is a connection between Savoy and the pentangle in the very colors stated by the poet of *GGK*.⁴

¹ Paul, *Scots Peerage*, VIII, 365.

² *American Historical Magazine*, II, 527.

³ Drummond, *Histories of Noble British Families*, I.

⁴ Rietstap, *Armorial général*, Supplément, V, app., p. 3. It may be pertinent to remark that, though instances of the use of heraldry like that in *GGK* abound in the English metrical romances, they do not seem to be used as references to actual people. I have spent a great deal of time trying to identify the descriptions of figures in *Morte Arthure*, the *Aunters of Arthur*, and other alliterative romances, with English coats of arms, but have been able to find no sure case of such identification. Of course a slight alteration in coloring or an addition to the figures or omission of part of those on any

It is possible, on the other hand, that the pentangle here has no heraldic significance. It will be remembered that its earliest, most persistent meaning is that of an amulet, a protection against evil spirits, and it may have that significance here. From the conduct of the Green Knight, his appearance, and his recovery from the beheading, it would be clear enough to the people of the court that Gawayne had to deal with some maleficent force,¹ and they may have had this device painted on his shield because it was a well-known and powerful charm against evil forces. Heraldry is said to have originated from the use of a device on a shield to protect the warrior from the evil eye.² In the *Perlesvaus*, relics in Perceval's shield on one occasion caused a devil to leap out of a dragon's head on his opponent's shield. According to early Irish stories, in battles devils screamed from the weapons of men, and hence it would be natural to think of some device to exorcise them. As a matter of fact we learn that "charms are preserved in swords" in Irish stories, and that relics were preserved in the hilts of swords (obviously for the same purpose) in French romances.³ The pentangle then may have been meant as a protection to Gawain against the Green Knight or against evil spirits connected with the latter.

If this explanation is accepted, it may be asked, why did the poet explain the device as a symbol of truth rather than a protection against devils? Various reasons might be conceived, but the most natural one is that the poet regarded the charm-properties of the device as so obvious that it would be stupid to recount them, and so, expecting the reader to see at once the fundamental meaning, gave the secondary interpretations. The poet knew that Solomon was

given shield would make a device corresponding to a historic coat-of-arms. But such treatment would be entirely too arbitrary: one could get any results one pleased by such methods. Connections like those made by Mr. George Neilson in his *Huchown of the Awle Ryale*, pp. 134 ff., could be made with almost any shield described in the romances. Only practical identity of description with actual shield would be convincing, and such identity the romance poets seem to have avoided.

¹ In l. 681 the Green Knight is called an "aluisch mon," and in ll. 240, 2191 ff., and 2283-84 it is indicated that people realized that he was not exactly human. Frazer (*Golden Bough: Balder*, I, 185 ff.) gives an account of a Norman festival in which pretense is made of throwing a man clad in green and called the "Green Wolf" into a fire. Evidently he was regarded as a demon.

² Elworthy, *The Evil Eye*, p. 179.

³ Leahy, *Heroic Romances of Ireland*, I, 57, 126, 143; "The Second Battle of Moytura," Rev. Celt., XII, 107; *Chanson de Roland*, ll. 2344, 2503 (see Gautier's ed., II, 117-18).

connected with it, and he knew that it symbolized the five wounds of Christ—both sources of power against evil forces. According to this interpretation, the colors of the shield would have no meaning: any visualizing poet would apply some heraldic colors to his description of a heraldic device.

Whether this explanation is correct or not, I do not think the pentangle has any great importance for the understanding of the fundamental story of *GGK*. The device is not, so far as I have been able to discover, used by the Celts, and it certainly does not figure in extant Celtic stories. It was most probably added by some late redactor, possibly as a reference to some person, possibly as a mere literary embellishment.

Whatever opinion the reader may have as to the validity of the more minute details of this discussion, it seems to me that the study establishes the following points: (1) *GGK* was not compiled from two stories, but is a transformation of a single primitive tale; and (2) *GGK* was not connected with the Order of the Garter, and any relation which is made between the poem and an order or occasion must account for the green baldric and the emphasis on the Christmas holidays.¹

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¹ This article was in page-proof before the publication of Professor Kittredge's *A Study of Gawain and the Green Knight*.